



Fw: questions from AP - Dimock and Washington County

Terri-A White to: Shawn Garvin, David Bloomgren

02/22/2012 12:04 PM

Cc: Brendan Gilfillan, kulik.michael, Ron Borsellino, seneca.roy, Joan Schafer

From: Terri-A White/R3/USEPA/US
To: Shawn Garvin/R3/USEPA/US@EPA, David Bloomgren/DC/USEPA/US@EPA
Cc: Brendan Gilfillan/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, kulik.michael@epa.gov, Ron Borsellino/R3/USEPA/US@EPA, seneca.roy@epa.gov, Joan Schafer/R3/USEPA/US@EPA

Shawn, David,

Below is an email from the AP reporter who's been covering Dimock. Roy and I have drafted responses to the 7 questions he has asked. Our responses are based on previously approved statements/answers and more recent input from Dennis Carney (for Q2 and Q5). Please review and advise. Thanks. -- Terri

----- Forwarded by Terri-A White/R3/USEPA/US on 02/22/2012 11:45 AM -----

From: "Rubinkam, Michael" <mrubinkam@ap.org>
To: Terri-A White/R3/USEPA/US@EPA
Cc: Trish Taylor/R3/USEPA/US, David Polish/R3/USEPA/US@EPA
Date: 02/20/2012 11:03 AM
Subject: questions from AP

Hi Terri,

As you know, I observed the EPA investigation in Dimock last week. I have some questions:

1. The EPA said in its news release that it is sampling residents' water to "further assess whether any residents are being exposed to hazardous substances that cause health concerns." What will the agency do if it finds hazardous substances in additional wells? It's vital that I be able to answer this question.

EPA's priority is to ensure safe drinking water to affected residents. EPA will evaluate the data and determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether alternate water should be provided. The individual decisions are based on the presence of hazardous substances and our assessment of the potential for health concerns using accepted regulatory and health based screening levels.

2. Will this sampling allow EPA to make a determination as to how the substances got in the water, and who is to blame for putting them there?

At this time, EPA has not done any detailed review to determine the cause. Our focus is first and foremost on the drinking water quality of residents.

3. What are the classes of substances that EPA is testing for (e.g. VOCs, metals)?

EPA's Jan. 19 action memo provides more specifics on what EPA is testing for. You can find it on EPA's website at:

<http://www.epaossc.org/sites/7555/files/Dimock%20Action%20Memo%2001-19-12.PDF>

4. I'd ask you to respond to Cabot's assertions about EPA and the data points that EPA used to justify its

action in Dimock:

http://www.cabotog.com/pdfs/Cabot_Statement_EPAWaterDelivery.pdf

Cabot's objection to the EPA investigation is summed up by this line:

"It appears that EPA selectively chose data on substances it was concerned about in order to reach a result it had predetermined. EPA chose to include specific data points without adequate knowledge or consideration of where or why the samples were collected, when they were taken, or the naturally occurring background levels for those substances throughout the Susquehanna County area. The end result is an unwarranted investigation and unnecessary delivery of water."

EPA issued the following statement on Jan. 26 in response to Cabot's assertions:

EPA is in this community sampling and providing water as a direct result of requests from Dimock residents. Our priority is the health of the people there, and our actions are guided entirely by science and the law. We are providing water to a handful of households because data developed by Cabot itself provides evidence that they are being exposed to hazardous substances at levels of health concern. We are conducting monitoring as a prudent step to investigate these concerns and develop a sound scientific basis for assessing the need for further action. This is consistent with steps we would take in any situation where we are presented with potential health risks to citizens under the federal laws we are charged to carry out.

In his State of the Union address, President Obama made clear that he is committed to tapping America's natural gas as part of a new era in American energy. He also affirmed our commitment to "developing this resource without putting the health and safety of our citizens at risk."

We have been clear that if we see an immediate threat to public health, we will not hesitate to take steps under the law to protect Americans whose health may be at risk. The Agency also welcomes PADEP and Cabot's participation in the sampling. Without a doubt, EPA's samples will be collected and reviewed using the highest scientific standards and we will take into account all other relevant and reliable data developed by PADEP and Cabot. The residents in Dimock deserve answers based on the facts, and we look forward to working together to meet our responsibility to this community.

5. When do you expect to have the first results?

Once a home is sampled, we expect to have quality-assured lab results for that particular home approximately five weeks later. The first samples were taken during the week of Jan. 22.

6. What exactly is EPA doing in Washington County?

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/12044/1209896-503-0.stm>

See #7 Response

7. Between Dimock and Washington County, it appears EPA is ramping up its investigations in Pennsylvania. Does EPA believe Pa. DEP is doing an inadequate job? As I understand it, the state agency has primary jurisdiction and responsibility for enforcing federal environmental laws. If you believe DEP is performing as it should, then why are these investigations necessary? Are they simply duplicative?

EPA is in the Dimock community sampling and providing water as a direct result of requests from Dimock residents. Our actions in Dimock reflect our longstanding responsibility under federal environmental laws to address threats to public health, and are guided entirely by science and the

law. The Dimock investigation is focused solely on water quality in residential wells.

In Washington County, Pa., EPA has conducted inspections at active industrial operations including well pads and compressor stations. These inspections were done as part of our multi-media enforcement program, which develops comprehensive approaches to address complex and emerging environmental problems. Multi-media inspections are conducted in various industrial sectors to determine their compliance with multiple federal environmental laws including for air, water and hazardous waste.

Many thanks,

Mike

Michael Rubinkam



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